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ABSTRACT

A popular model for strengthening family/school/community connections is through the school-based integrated service models described in this compendium. These programs, referred to as extended schools programs, must include family growth and development as a primary aim. A great deal can be learned from early efforts to implement such programs, and these lessons are: (1) quality leadership is essential; (2) the commitment of the parties involved to garnering parent involvement in planning and implementation must be honored; (3) ensure policies and practices are culturally compatible; (4) long-term commitments to program development must be made; (5) basic logistics must not be overlooked; (6) models should vary according to needs, goals, and limitations; and (7) integrated service initiatives must develop partnerships with local universities. (SLD)

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Laboratory for Student Success

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The research reported herein was supported in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education through a contract to the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) established at the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE), and in part by CRHDE. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position of the supporting agencies, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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Lessons Learned About Integrating Services

Andrea G. Zetlin

There seems to be a consensus that there is a distinct population of children who are failing in school, and that the problem of how to best educate them is going to require a broad group of professionals, agencies, and parents working together to test new ideas and practices, and bring about positive change in school success rates. To a large extent, this sentiment echoes what Comer said so elegantly: that we cannot separate the academic from social and emotional development in children, and we need to incorporate all the resources of the school (including parents and the community) into a common blend of care and education.

A popular strategy for strengthening family/school/community connections is through the school-based, integrated service models described in this compendium. Unfortunately, many such programs have been given names such as "School of the Future," "New Futures Initiative," "Schools of the 21st Century," and so forth, when the reality is that there is an urgency to implement these programs on a large scale today.

These programs (which I refer to as extended schools programs) must go beyond teaching and learning activities to include family growth and development as a primary aim. There are at least five essential characteristics that these kinds of programs must have: (a) a strong administrative commitment to the project; (b) the involvement of parents and teachers in the program activities; (c) the integration of a broad array of health and human services; (d) the involvement of both public and private organizations; and (e) a long-term commitment to the project that includes a commitment to evaluation and the feedback of information into the program so that change takes place when dictated by evaluation.

A very rocky road leads to the development and implementation of these extended school concepts. This journey has begun through the development of model programs such as those in Texas, North Carolina, Baltimore, and a number in California. I happen to be associated with one in East Los Angeles at the Murchison Street School. A great deal can be learned from these fledgling efforts, especially when the program developers are willing to candidly share with others the kinds of hurdles and roadblocks that have impeded their progress. It is this type of detailed description of both the program development and the evaluation side of how programs progress that can forewarn others of stumbling blocks (of which there are many).

Some writing on this topic refers to extended school program developers as pioneers navigating unexplored territories. Despite the fact that the extended school concept is almost 100 years old, the term "unexplored" is justified. This is because the ever-growing populations most in need of extended school services (homeless children, inner-city-ravaged children, children of diverse immigrant groups) present multifaceted needs and challenges of magnitudes the likes of which have previously not been seen. Further,

this occurs at a time of diminishing resources. In short, building support for and maintaining a collaborative venture to effectively serve children, mildly put, is a daunting task.

For those attempting to meet this challenge, the collaborative initiatives (successes and failures alike) implemented by previous practitioners contain valuable first-hand experience and information, summarized here into seven general "lessons."

Lessons from Practice

- **Quality leadership is essential.**

  A top-level catalyst, champion, convener, facilitator, someone who recognizes and acknowledges that the current delivery of education, health, and human services is not meeting the needs of at least some of the population being served is needed. This catalyst must have the vision and authority to facilitate interagency collaboration. The Murchison Street School initiative, for example, started as a grass-roots project. In the beginning there were very fragile relationships between the school and agencies as negotiations proceeded. Once Healthy Start funding was received, the initiative became more credible. It is now less vulnerable to the kinds of little problems that would have killed it in its initial stages.

- **The commitment of the parties involved to garnering parent involvement in planning and implementation must be honored**.

  We have to ask ourselves if we are truly prepared for parents' full participation. We must be prepared to relinquish some of our power as administrators, researchers, and program developers. We have to listen to them, and make changes and organize our programs around their input. We must also make a commitment to help parents feel comfortable, teach them how to be involved, and most importantly, make them feel like valued associates.

  At the Murchison Street School, we had to be mentors for parents and guide them through the process of how to access the formal system of delivery. We had to teach them how to do needs assessment, how to respond to the questionnaires, how to begin to ask each other questions, how to inform us of the needs of the community, how to develop a list of potential service providers and weigh the pros and cons of each service-providing agency, and, finally, how to access these agencies. This is a very exhausting process, but one that has tremendous payoff. Before developing a parent center, parents walked their children to school, left, and came back in the afternoon to take them home, without ever entering the building. One year after opening the parent center, large numbers of parents were attending programs *that they proposed*, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, parenting workshops, and arts and crafts programs. Today, parents regularly assist in the development of instructional

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materials for the classroom; they sponsor grade-level and schoolwide activities, and they present the principal with a list of their agenda items.

- **Ensure that policies and practices are culturally compatible.**

  Too often, planners of extended school programs do not take awareness of cultural compatibility further than translating letters or ensuring that a translator is present at parent meetings. At the Murchison Street School, we try to integrate this awareness into every possible aspect of our mission. This means being cognizant of families' daily realities. For example, when we have ESL classes for parents, we let them bring their children. They don't have child care; they don't have money to pay for baby-sitting. We even provide toys for the children to play with while the parents learn. It is a wonderful model for the children, and it makes the parents feel comfortable.

- **Long-term commitments to program development must be made**.

  Planners, supporters, and other participants must realize and accept that it might be 5 or 7 or 10 years before the sorts of outcome data that society will applaud become available. Further, it is vital that key financial and political supporters have realistic expectations for success as well, both in terms of goals and the time needed to achieve them. This kind of long-term commitment includes a willingness to persevere as issues of leadership and basic philosophy are worked out. For example, at one extended school, called A Child's Place, a debate continues over whether they should have "a school with a social service component" or "a social service agency with an education component." As part of a long-term commitment, participants must also accept that there is a dynamic nature to the process of program development; necessary changes will have to occur as evaluation warrants.

- **Basic logistics must not be overlooked**.

  Attention to the "nuts and bolts" aspect of collaborative undertakings is vital. This includes matters as basic as securing adequate physical space to providing training and cross-training so that participants from different backgrounds learn to negotiate their new roles and responsibilities. Obviously, the need for additional funding to support operating costs cannot be overstated. Ideally, a venture is not dependent on grant money; realistically, however, this is not the case. Because of this, it is absolutely vital that initiatives have center coordinators with gifts for acquiring supplementary funding and overseeing financial activities, as well as attending to case management, interagency networking, troubleshooting, operations management, and so forth. Placing too many of these responsibilities on school principals is both unfair and ineffective.

- **Models should vary according to needs, goals, and limitations**.

  Models must be developed based on the local needs and concerns of schools, particularly those with large immigrant, highly transient, and/or homeless populations. Such schools have very distinct needs; thus

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programs focused around them will assume different configurations. These schools are plagued to different degrees by inadequate child care, after-school care, and job training. For a given school, gang affiliation might be a pressing concern; in another, a shortage of bilingual programs might be an issue. Many of these schools struggle with a mixture of high dropout and teenage pregnancy rates. It is crucial that a detailed evaluation of available models be conducted to yield, as Wang, Haertel, and Walberg underscore in this volume, a much-needed knowledge base on how to provide school-linked service integration that is both feasible and cost effective.

- **Integrated service initiatives must develop partnerships with local universities.**
  In forging partnerships with universities, integrated service initiatives receive the technical assistance needed for both program development and evaluation. For these partnerships to be successful, universities must build collaboration skills into undergraduate and graduate training programs for social service workers and educators alike. Additionally, integrated service sites should be used as training bases so that students get experience working with educators and service workers from related fields.

The desire of educators to be responsive to the needs of children and families is evident. There are hundreds, possibly thousands of schools across the United States that have demonstrated this dedication and interest. It has been said that educators who are committed to addressing the needs of children and families can propose creative solutions and overcome numerous obstacles to quality education and services for all. I believe this is true; it is evidenced in the experiences of the initiatives described in this volume.

It is important that educators in general, and integrated services initiatives in particular, remain focused on proceeding with the goal of fundamentally changing the way education and social services are provided. These changes should include the means by which families are involved in such initiatives, and must occur deep within the structures of organizations and schools such that they are manifested in more than simply add-on programs. In short, we must make significant changes in the ways schools and collaborating agencies do business to foster real school/community connections for the enablement of the successful achievement of children in schools.

The Laboratory for Student Success

The Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) is one of ten regional educational laboratories in the nation funded by the U.S. Department of Education to revitalize and reform educational practice in the service of children and youth.

The mission of the Laboratory for Student Success is to strengthen the capacity of the mid-Atlantic region to enact and sustain lasting systemic educational reform through collaborative programs of applied research and development and services to the field. In particular, the LSS facilitates the transformation of research-based knowledge into useful tools that can be readily integrated into the educational reform process both regionally and nationally. To ensure a high degree of effectiveness, the work of the LSS is continuously refined based on feedback from the field on what is working and what is needed in improving educational practice.

The ultimate goal of the LSS is the formation of a connected system of schools, parents, community agencies, professional organizations, and institutions of higher education that serves the needs of all students and is linked with a high-tech national system for information exchange. In particular, the aim is to bring researchers and research-based knowledge into synergistic coordination with other efforts for educational improvement led by field-based professionals.

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